REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

This amendment is being filed as part of an RCE and replaces the last unentered amendment.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite "the natural fiber material being fed into the apparatus with a water moisture percentage more than 1%, and said water-reactive material reacts with the water present in said natural fiber material and ~~and/or~~ released from said natural fiber material;".

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 2, 8-10, 14, 16-17, 32-34, and 36 are directed to allowable subject matter.

Claim 38 has been allowed.

Claim 31 was rejected as indefinite. Claim 31 has been amended as suggested by the Examiner.

There are no further formal matters.

Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 11-13, 15, 30, 35, and 37 stand rejected as anticipated by ROHATGI et al. U.S. 2003/0021915.

Page 3 of the Official Action indicates that ROHATGI teaches that a reactive material is added and that this reactive material reacts with the hydroxyl component of the cellulose fibers. This teaching is said to necessarily result in the altering of the natural fiber material and reacting with the water present in the natural fiber product.

Applicants strongly disagree.

ROHATGI does not disclose a water-reactive material,l as recited. Indeed, ROHATGI only refers (and briefly) to coloring agents. In connection with plastic extrusion, however, coloring agents are typically pigment colors which are not water-reactive.

Further, none of the foaming agents in ROHATGI is water-reactive. The foaming agents start reacting when they are heated to a certain temperature.

ROHATGI does disclose functional groups in compatibilizers that form covalent bonds with the OH groups in the cellulosic fibers, i.e., a OH-reactive material is disclosed. Thus, the reaction is between the OH groups in the cellulosic fibers and the compatibilizer. The cellulosic fibers always comprise OH groups even if the moisture percentage is zero. Thus, even if the cellulosic fibers do not comprise water, they comprise OH groups which would react with the compatibilizer.

In the invention, as recited however, the reaction is between a water-reactive material and water (free water in the process). Thus, the reaction is different and therefore the outcome is also different.

The Official Action acknowledges that ROHATGI teaches a reactive material that reacts with the hydroxyl component of the cellulose fibers. There is no support for the position that a reactive material reacting with the hydroxyl component of the cellulose fibers "necessarily results in [the reactive material] … reacting with the water present in the natural fiber product." Without support for this assertion, the anticipation rejection is not believed to be viable.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all the pending claims.

Applicants believe the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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